

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 5269

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR PN VE
SUBJECT: PRES PEREZ AGAIN EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER
INTERNAL PANAMANIAN SITUATION

1. DURING A CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON
ANOTHER SUBJECT, PRESIDENT PEREZ AGAIN EXPRESSED
CONCERN OVER THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN PANAMA WHICH
HE SAID MIGHT WELL DETERIORATE AND CREATE A REAL CRISIS
FOR THE US AND THE TREATIES. PEREZ REFERRED TO HIS
RECENT CONTACTS WITH THE LIBERAL PARTY AND WITH SAMUDIO,
AND SAID THAT THE LIBERALS WERE SPLIT WITH NO COHESIVE
STRATEGY. SAMUDIO HAD TOLD HIM THAT SOME OF THIS PARTY
WANTED TO JOIN A COALITION AROUND ARNULFO ARRIAS.
THERE APPEARED TO BE A GROWING BELIEF THAT ALL THE
OPPOSITION SHOULD JOIN ARRIAS AND CONFRONT TORRIJOS.

2. PEREZ SAID HE THOUGHT THIS TREND WAS DANGEROUS.
THE LAST THING TORRIJOS WILL DO IS TO PERMIT ARRIAS
TO TAKE THE PRESIDENCY; NOR WOULD THE NATIONAL GUARD.
PEREZ THOUGHT THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY SHOULD CONSTITUTE
AN INDEPENDENT AND PRESTIGIOUS OPPOSITION DISTINCT
FROM ARRIAS AND THAT TORRIJOS SHOULD BOTH RESPECT THAT
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AND PERMIT GREATER DEMOCRATIZATION AND EXPRESSION TO
THE OPPOSITION FORCES. THAT HE THOUGHT WAS THE ONLY
WAY TO HEAD OFF AN ARRIAS CHALLENGE. THE LACK OF
REASONABLE STRATEGY BY THE LIBERALS WAS MATCHED ONLY
BY THE SHORTSIGHTED VIEWS OF ADVISORS AROUND TORRIJOS
WHO WANTED TO CURTAIL RATHER THAN PROMOTE DEMOCRATIZATION.

3. COMMENT: PEREZ DOES, OF COURSE, GET INTENSE ABOUT THINGS AND OFTEN OVERREACTS. IN ANY EVENT, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HE IS WORRED NOW, AND RATHER INTENSELY SO.

4. PEREZ SAID HE WAS VERY WORRIED THAT THE SITUATION WILL POLARIZE, THAT TROUBLE MAY RESULT, AND THAT THIS WOULD DAMAGE THE WHOLE US POLICY AS MANIFESTED IN THE TREATY NEGOTIATION, WITH THE TREATY OPPONENTS IN THE US FEELING "VINDICATED."
VAKY

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Message Attributes

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